DPI PROGRAMME Update

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

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UPCOMING EVENTS

8 March 1994 - International Women's Day

Forum: "Women in Power"
Trusteeship Council Chamber: chaired by Bella Abzug, Co-Chair of Women's Environment and Development Organization, and Cheryl Stoute, President of the Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations

Speakers:
Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, President Mary Robinson of Ireland, Secretary-General Gertrude Mongella (Tanzania) of the Fourth World Conference on Women, U.S. Ambassador Madeleine K. Albright, Supatra Masdit, convenor of NGO Forum, Beijing, 30 August - 8 September 1995

Peter Hansen - New USG for Humanitarian Affairs

Peter Hansen (Denmark) has been appointed as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, effective 1 March. Among his previous positions, Mr. Hansen was the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations.

(Press release SG/A/573, BIO/2839, 11 Feb. 1994)

JOSE AYALA LASSO - HUMAN RIGHTS HIGH COMMISSIONER

The General Assembly has appointed José Ayala Lasso (Ecuador) as High Commissioner for Human Rights, for a four-year term beginning on 28 February. At a press conference at Headquarters, Mr. Lasso called for a global "culture of human rights" and said that he would bring to the cause of human rights a moral commitment. He urged all Governments to open their doors to the High Commissioner, so that he could seek dialogue with them "without any prejudice, without any selectivity".

Mr. Lasso pledged to work for the promotion of education for human rights and welcomed the possibility of creating a decade for human rights education. Human rights of women would be a central concern of the High Commissioner, he said, as women in many societies were still discriminated against.

JACQUES DIOUF - NEW FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Jacques Diouf (Senegal) is the new head of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Mr. Diouf was elected FAO Director-General on 8 November 1993 and took office officially on 4 January 1994.

(Press release FAO/3587, 4 Jan. 1994)

SECRETARY-GENERAL SPEAKS

SMALLER UN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IN SOMALIA

The United Nations should adjust its strategy in Somalia and deploy a smaller peace-keeping force there to protect ports, convoys, and refugees, the Secretary-General said in a recent report (S/1994/12, 6 January 1994). This reflects "unmistakable signs of fatigue among the international community", and a growing consensus that Somalis must take greater responsibility for the reconstruction of their country.

Several Governments, including the United States, plan to withdraw their troops from the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) in the coming weeks. Although other governments have been asked to contribute additional forces, "not a single positive response has been received", the Secretary-General reported.

In the meantime, the report says, UN agencies are continuing to consolidate the gains made in the last year. UNOSOM II has helped Somalis establish governing councils in 53 of the country's 81 districts, and rebuild police and judicial institutions from the ground. The rate of malnutrition among children has declined by more than two-thirds in the last year. More Somali children are immunized against deadly diseases and more attend school than before the war-induced famine that ravaged their country between 1991 and 1993.

NO EFFECTIVE CEASE-FIRE IN ANGOLA

The United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) should not be expanded before the parties in Angola reach a cease-fire agreement, the Secretary-General writes in his report. (S/1994/100, 29 January). In spite of the deterioration of the military situation in Angola, humanitarian activities undertaken by UN agencies and NGOs have made considerable progress throughout Angola. This helps to create a climate favourable to a political settlement, the report says. The total number of people affected by the humanitarian crisis in Angola stands at nearly 3.3 million — an increase of 10 per cent since 14 December 1993.

UN POLICE COMPONENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Secretary-General has proposed expanding the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) by some 1,000 civilian police to provide security during the electoral campaign scheduled to begin on 1 September 1994. In a report (S/1994/89/add. 1, 28 January), he writes that recent positive developments in Mozambique deserve the full support of the international community. The peace process there is "only one element in the wider transformation" taking place in the entire region of Southern Africa, he says.

AD-HOC JUNIC MEETING

The Joint UN Information Committee (JUNIC), made up of representatives of UN agencies, other UN system partners and representatives of DPI, met mid-February in an ad hoc meeting at UN Headquarters to prepare for their annual summer session which this year will take place in Montreal in July 1994. JUNIC members discussed inter-agency cooperation for the major Conferences in Beijing, Cairo and Copenhagen, among other things.

READEX
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NEWS FROM THE FIELD

UNIC RIO - TV Programme on UN Issues Broadcast in 23 Brazilian States

Viewers in 23 Brazilian States can tune in daily to a 10-minute television programme entirely devoted to UN-related issues. The programme, ***As Naçiones Unidas,*** is co-produced by UNIC Rio de Janeiro and the Brazilian educational and governmental TV network, TV Educativa (TVE), and broadcast on TVE.

The producers of the programme are journalism students who are trained by UNIC Rio and TVE professionals. The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) selects four students to take part in the production from the discussion of subjects to the final editing, as part of their degree programme. Since 1989, more than 20 interns have participated. They discuss subjects with UNIC staff, undertake research at UNIC and gather information materials. After completing their journalism degree, most of the students keep in contact with UNIC, using its resources for information on UN-related issues.

Each week's five programmes are devoted to one topic which is examined through interviews, local features, UN in Action videos, and "The World Chronicle". In 1993, UNIC and TVE co-produced programmes on UN peace-keeping forces, rural poverty, the 1994 International Year of the Family, human rights, indigenous peoples and UN Day, among other topics.

UNIC Rio says that the number of telephone calls and letters it receives in connection with the broadcast reflects the high interest it generates among audiences all over Brazil.

UNIC BRIEFS

UNIC Dakar

UNIC Director Moncef Kartas recently visited Mauritania to examine how to improve the dissemination of information on UN activities in the social and economic fields in that country. He held meetings with UN agencies, Government officials, media representatives and NGOs on how to highlight UN activities in Mauritania. The lack of human and financial resources and the need for coordination of UN information activities in the field were stressed at the meetings. Participants agreed to ask the media for their help. Radio Mauritania and TV Mauritania will broadcast programmes with UN information on a regular basis, and "reading corners" with UN materials will open throughout key cities of Mauritania. It was also agreed to distribute UN documents to the NGO Terre Vivante in order to improve its information activities.

UNIC Madrid

Joseph Verner Reed, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, was recently accompanied by UNIC Director Mario Zamorano to a ceremony in Oviedo (northern Spain) to receive the "Principe de Asturias" Award given to the UN Blue Helmets in former Yugoslavia. Eight peace-keepers from six different countries attended the ceremony at which Mr. Reed read a statement on behalf of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

UNIC Paris

M. Alain Juppe, the Foreign Minister of France, will preside over the French National Committee on the celebration of the United Nations 50th Anniversary, UNIC Director Hassen M. Fodha reports.

UNIC Yaounde

Seventy-three Cameroon Police, who served in Cambodia as part of the UNTAC Police Force, were decorated with National Medals of Honour at a ceremony in Yaounde recently. In a speech at the event, the Head of the Cameroon Police Force and Secretary of State for Internal Security, Jean Fochive, praised the police contingent for having successfully accomplished the tasks assigned to them by the United Nations in Cambodia. He said that Cameroon Police were ready to serve the United Nations again.

Former Yugoslavia Outlook

MORE UN TROOPS IN BOSNIA TO MONITOR CEASE-FIRE

With the new cease-fire in place in Sarajevo, the United Nations is considering to deploy another 2,500 troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The cease-fire became effective after warnings by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that it would use airstrikes against Serbian weapons positions in and around Sarajevo if they were not moved by Sunday, 19 February, the deadline set for Serb withdrawal.

Kofi Annan, USG for Peace-keeping Affairs, has asked UN Member States to contribute additional troops to monitor the weapons withdrawal and cease-fire in Sarajevo. Briefing the Security Council on the situation in Bosnia, he said the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) needed more troops to enable it to move into areas other than Sarajevo to halt the fighting. (Press release DH/1587, 22 Feb. 1994)

Security Council Warns Croatia

Croatia has been warned by the Security Council of "serious measures" if the country fails to put an immediate end to all forms of interference in Bosnia.

In a recent statement, the Security Council called Croatia's actions in Bosnia a "serious hostile act" against a UN Member State. The Council condemned Croatia for deploying elements of its Army along with heavy military equipment in the central and southern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
(Press release SC/5781, 3 Feb.)

Human Rights Violations in Former Yugoslavia

The 5 February artillery attack in Sarajevo in which 68 civilians were killed and 200 wounded was discussed at the fiftieth session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (31 January to 11 March). The Special Rapporteur on the situation in former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, called the attack a "crime of war against the civilian population" and a flagrant and deliberate violation of human rights. He urged the Commission to take a stand on the attack and called for prosecution of the perpetrators by the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina told the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (New York, 17 January to 4 February) that Serbian aggressors are continuing to commit massive rape as part of their "genocidal project of ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While human rights violations are committed by all sides, the Serbian aggressors "apply rape as a policy", she said.
(Press releases HR/CN/512, 9 Feb.; HR/CN/526, 18 Feb.; WOM/726, 1 Feb.)

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

Report of the Secretary-General on the Massacre of the Civilian Population in Stupni Do, Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/1994/154, 10 Feb, 1994).
Investigations undertaken by the Military Police of UNPROFOR "have shown that crimes against innocent civilians in Stupni Do took place on 23 October 1993", this report says. Investigations are continuing in order to gain as much evidence as possible for eventual trial of the perpetrators before the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991.

Economic Assistance to States Affected by the implementation of the Security Council Resolutions Imposing Sanctions Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Report of the Secretary-General. (A/48/573, S/26705, 8 Nov. 1993)
This is a survey of the special economic problems suffered by States affected by sanctions imposed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. It concludes that the Security Council needs to set up a mechanism to analyze such special economic problems and to identify measures to improve the international response to the effects of sanctions.

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (A/RES/48/88, 29 Dec. 1993). The resolution calls for a cease-fire, agreed to by all parties, and reaffirms that those who have seized land by "ethnic cleansing" and by the use of force must relinquish those lands.

World Water Day

"Water for All", theme of 1994 World Water Day on 22 March

"Water...the source of life. Most people in the developed world take it for granted. For drinking, washing, farming, recreation, it's always there in abundance, and at an affordable price. But for more than one billion poor people in the rural villages and urban slums of the developing world, water is also a source of disease, and even death". This quote is from the introduction to the special issue of UNDP World Development entirely devoted to the problem of Safe Water 2000. In the four years since the UN Decade for International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (1981 to 1990) came to an end, the problem has not been solved. The shadow of future water scarcity, coupled with the sharp increase in the world's population, prompts urgent action. By the year 2025, the world's population will double to ten billion, but we will be sharing the same amount of water. As a result, water might become more expensive than oil, UNDP writes.

World Water Day, 22 March, was called for by the General Assembly in 1992 (resolution 47/193) on the recommendation by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The General Assembly called for conservation of freshwater resources as a way of contributing to economic development and social well-being.

Celebration of World Water Day

"Water for All" is the theme at this year's observance, which will be celebrated by the various UN agencies and NGOs. A hot-air balloon in the shape of a water droplet will be launched on 22 March — the beginning of a ministerial meeting at The Hague scheduled to coincide with the Day. The Dutch Government is hosting the meeting as input to the Commission on Sustainable Development, which will also be discussing freshwater at its 1994 session in May.

Many UN agencies, including the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), UNEP, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and Habitat, are producing or reissuing booklets, videos or posters on water themes. UN Radio (DPI) is producing a series of documentaries about freshwater, with support from UN agencies. WaterCan, a major Canadian NGO, is organizing a nation-wide observance of Water Day in cooperation with the Girl Guides.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Publications

International Conference on Water and the Environment: Development issues for the 21st century, 26-31 January, 1992, Dublin.
The booklet may be obtained by contacting: Director, Hydrology and Water Resources Department, WMO, 41, Avenue Guiseppe-Motta. Case Postale 2300, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.
The Conference was attended by 500 participants, including experts from 100 countries and representatives of 80 international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

UNDP, Safe Water 2000.
This special issue of the UNDP magazine looks at the situation in Mali, Nepal, Egypt, Bangladesh, Morocco, among other countries. For more information, please contact: UNDP Division of Information, One UN Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Video

Quest for Clean Water: three sequences from UNDP Azimuths TV series.

Kiribati: Living at the ends of the earth.
This part shows how a remote Pacific community has mobilized for self-help development through installation of simple "Tamana pumps" and rainwater catchments.

Cuba: Putting a stop to pollution.
Depicts efforts to clean up the waters of Havana Bay.

Lesotho: Black Women's white gold.
Illustrates how improving access to clean drinking water can make a vital difference to the lives of women in this country plagued by frequent droughts.

Documents

Water resources: Progress in the Implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan of Agenda 21 on Water-related issues. Report of the Secretary-General (E/C.7/1994/4, 12 Jan. 1994). The report says that water shortages are becoming a common occurrence in industrialized and developing countries alike, and that the world may be reaching a water crisis situation of global proportions.

Consideration of New Instruments with Implications for Global Action. Report of the Secretary-General (E.C.7/1994/5, 11 Jan. 1994). The report describes the main elements of various international instruments that focus on water and environment, with emphasis on the results of the 1992 International Conference on Water and the Environment held in Dublin, and on Agenda 21 as it relates to fresh water resources.

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY 23 MARCH 1994

"Observing Weather and Climate" is the theme for World Meteorological Day to be observed on 23 March. The Day has been observed every year since 1950 to raise public awareness about the role of meteorology and hydrological services in sustainable development.

In his message for the Day, G.O.P. Obasi, Secretary-General of WMO, says "systematic observations of the global environment, the atmosphere and water are fundamental to understanding and predicting the behaviour of the global environment". UNICs play an important role in spreading knowledge about the work of the organizations of the UN system in countries around the world, he notes. A list of the national focal points for the WMO in different countries can be obtained by contacting:

WMO Secretariat, Geneva
TEL: (022) 41 22 730 81 11
FAX: (022) 41 22 734 23 26

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

1994 World Meteorological Day information kit consists of a message from Professor G.O.P.Obasi, Secretary-General of WMO; a booklet entitled "Observing the World's Environment: Weather, Climate and Water"; and a poster with the slogan "Invest in the Future - Observing Weather, Climate and Water", available in A, C, E, F, R, S. The kit can be obtained by contacting the above address.

NGO briefing on 28 January 1994: The Middle East Peace Process

Speakers: Mr. Mustapha Tlili, Chief, Anti-Apartheid, Palestine, and Decolonization Section, DPI.

Mr. Mame Balla Sy, Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Senegal;

Mr. Arie Tenne, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Israeli Permanent Mission to the United Nations;

Mr. Muin Shreim, Counsellor to the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations.

UNITED NATIONS ROLE

The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993, placed a great operational responsibility on the United Nations, Mustapha Tlili told NGOs at Headquarters. A high-level task force on the economic and social development of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was created in order to coordinate the United Nations system, NGOs and other institutions, and to mobilize international financial support.

The United Nations participated as a silent observer in the 1991 Madrid Conference — a role foreseen under Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In the multilateral talks that followed, the Organization participated as a full, extra-regional partner, Mr. Tlili said. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also contributed their expertise to the talks.

Dialogue

DPI's Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine consists mainly of setting up encounters between senior journalists and Israeli,

Palestinian and other policy makers and analysts, Mr. Tlili said. The objective is to act as "catalyst for a continuing Israeli-Palestinian dialogue aimed at exploring the prospects and modalities of peace between the two peoples", he said.

Mr. Tlili found it most remarkable that both sides consider the peace process irreversible. He urged NGOs to communicate this encouraging fact to the international public.

Palestinian Rights Committee

Mame Balla Sy, representing Ambassador Keba Birane Cisse, Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said the Committee's essential goal is "the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, and the recognition and exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, primarily the right to self-determination". The Committee supports the Declaration of Principles and aims at mobilizing international support and assistance to the Palestinian people. It continues to monitor the situation in the Occupied Territories and receives reports on the human rights situation in that area, Mr. Sy stated.

Economic Planning - Political Development

The new Israeli Government supports the participation of the United Nations in the Middle East peace process, Mr. Arie Tenne, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Israeli Permanent Mission to the United Nations said. And the General Assembly broke new grounds when, for the first time ever, it reached consensus on the question of providing assistance to the Palestinian people.

The future depends on solid economic planning that will serve as foundation for political development. UN involvement will be a "vital contribution" to this, Mr. Tenne said. NGOs in Israel contribute to the ongoing peace process; however, he said, their success is limited because they do not communicate with the Palestinian side. He called for mutual efforts to solve common problems instead of separate solutions for the individual parties. The issue of scarce water resources was an example of this, Mr. Tenne pointed out.

Declaration on the Principles of Interim Self-Government

Muin Shreim, Counsellor to the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations, said the Declaration of Principles was agreed to because Israel, for the first time, "officially recognized the Palestinians as a people, with their distinct identity, and national and political rights, and also recognized the PLO as their legitimate representative". However, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, free elections to be held among the Palestinian people, and the establishment of the Palestinian Interim Self-Government do not solve the "core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", he said. The status of Jerusalem, the settlements in the Occupied Territories, the Palestinian refugees, borders, and security arrangements would only be solved through further negotiations, he noted.

"Peace Process Is Irreversible"

The peace process should be consolidated by economic development, as poverty and deprivation provide "a fertile breeding ground for instability, violence and radicalism", Mr. Shreim warned. The Palestinian people consider the peace process both "sustainable" and "irreversible" and hope that the agreement with Israel will create "a new reality" with both peoples striving for "mutual benefits and common interests".

NGO briefing on 20 January 1994: The Situation in Somalia.

Speaker: Farouk Mawlawi, former Spokesman for United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II)

UNOSOM II has suffered the greatest number of losses in human lives in the history of UN peace-keeping missions, Mr. Mawlawi told NGOs. He recalled the events of 5 June 1993, when 25 Pakistani soldiers were killed and 54 were wounded in a series of ambushes and armed attacks. This incident led to a number of military follow-up activities which unfortunately persuaded many Western countries to pull their troops out of the UNOSOM forces, he said.

Toward National Reconciliation

UNOSOM II set the stage for national reconciliation and virtually put an end to starvation in Somalia — facts that went almost unnoticed by the international community, Mr. Mawlawi pointed out.

The Addis Ababa Agreement of 15 January 1993, signed by 14 Somali factions, was the most remarkable and remains the foremost task of UNOSOM II, he said. It included a cease-fire agreement, a conference on national reconciliation, and commitment by the factions to disarm. As a result, a Transitional National Council (TNC) had been formed, effective 27 March 1993, to serve as the prime political authority during the transitional period. Regional councils had been established in nine of the 13 Somali regions. In addition, 53 out of 73 district councils had been formed, whose members are elected or appointed through consensus-based selection in accordance with Somali traditions. Workshops had been set up with the assistance of the Peace Institute of Sweden and the South African Management Institute to prepare the new members, he said.

Need for Disarmament and Funding

Mr. Mawlawi pointed out that the process toward national reconciliation was not yet irreversible and must be accompanied by disarmament as well as costly economic and social development to ensure success in the long term. Even though the international community has committed already $165.5 million in voluntary contributions, less than $50 million has been received. Peace could only be achieved through programmes that require extensive funding. In addition, Mr. Mawlawi said, the Somali people must understand that "they have to help themselves."

A Prosperous Somalia

Describing Somalia as one of the "potentially wealthiest countries in Africa", Mr. Mawlawi contended that "recovery can be attained fairly easily after peace is made". The country has two river basins with rich soil that offer good opportunities for growing fruit and crops, fisheries that are among the best in the world, and wealth stemming from trading livestock. He especially praised the work of the NGOs that are contributing towards national reconciliation through their immense generosity, humanity, professionalism and will to sacrifice. Revival of "the prosperous Somalia that once was" could only be attained through the joint efforts of national, international, and non-governmental institutions, and would be gratefully received by the Somali people, Mr. Mawlawi said.

A detailed account of UNOSOM II can be found in DPI's information notes on peace-keeping operations, (DPI/1306/Rev.2, Nov.1993).

For further information on the activities of the NGO Section or on application procedures for NGO association with DPI, please contact:

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